

# SPONSA REGIS

JULY, 1964



HE WHO HAD FIVE TALENTS  
GAINED FIVE MORE, BUT  
THE MAN WHO HAD  
ONE BURIED IT.



# SPONSA REGIS

A SPIRITUAL REVIEW FOR SISTERS

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# Love and Spiritual Formation

JOHN C. SCHWARZ, S.J.

Love is the heart of Christianity, the core of Christ's revelation to us concerning the relationship of God and man. Christ himself left no doubt of this fact when he dramatically enjoined us to "love the Lord your God with your whole heart... (and) 'love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments hinge the whole Law and the prophets." If love is the heart of Christianity, it must indeed come to be the heart of every religious community and every religious rule. But in the words of a familiar cliché, this is more easily said than done, more easily claimed than realized, especially within the complex conditions of modern religious life.

Indeed, religious life, as the twentieth-century religious inherits it, comes in highly developed form. Centuries have gone into its now-complex formation. The spiritual life itself has been the object of study and analysis by the greatest intellects, refining, analyzing, dividing and sub-dividing its elements. As a result, the religious meets a formidable array of rules, customs, and related minutiae upon entry into the modern religious community. If *love* constitutes the goal and motivation for this new way of life, this point too must often be accepted on faith. For initial stress sometimes seems to fall much more heavily upon a particular manner of speaking, a particular garb, a particular mode of genuflection, particular rubrics of common prayer, a particular seating in chapel and refectory, a very particular promptness in all things — and so forth. The young religious encounters exhortations, retreats, conferences, as well as various urgencies arising from the pages of spiritual books. Amidst this often confusing experience, the love of God — the heart of the matter — may not automatically emerge. One remains unconvinced and unaware of love unless it is actually experienced somehow here in this new way of life. Words alone convey neither the conviction nor the experience, especially words addressed to groups. If the young religious is to encounter the reality of divine love it must be met not only

in her fellow neophytes in the community but primarily from those "in charge," from the older, experienced religious whom she meets.

It is well if older religious, and above all superiors and mistresses of young religious, give "good example" in mortification, in prayerfulness, in religious gentility, in regular observance. But these are hardly enough, for they are simply not the heart of the matter. There must be above all a thoroughly genuine and highly effective communication of love, for *only by this* "will men know that you are my disciples." *Only by this* . . .

Modern psychology abundantly documents the necessity of love in life, a teaching which blends harmoniously with the theology of creation, redemption, and human destiny. The human personality learns love only by first receiving and experiencing love in the family, and a similar pattern occurs in a general way within the religious family as well. For the religious will not be convinced of the actual place of God's love and its human communication within this particular community by merely hearing of it or reading of it in the Rule. Love must be encountered, experienced. A climate of love, then, is truly the basis of religious conviction, formation, and consecration. Some hearty few may marvelously survive even in the absence of such love; most will not. Those who do survive in the superficial sense of remaining within the community may nevertheless find themselves hampered in their own response of love to God and those whom he gives them to serve.

No amount of asceticism will ever compensate in a religious community for a corporate failure of love, for it is in love (and not in anything else) that Christ places the whole of the Law. If love be lacking, a true dehydration occurs. Only a stoic striving for virtue remains. But virtue itself becomes an illusory goal when and if love is reduced to a mere printed sequence of four meaningless letters and one meaningless sound. Of what value is such virtue, such dry perfection?

Religious are universally prompt to *speak* of love, but all can nevertheless examine themselves on Saint John's words, "Little children, let us not love merely in word or with the tongue, but in action, in reality." If this applies to subjects in religion, as

indeed it does, it refers the more pointedly to those placed in authority — especially over the young religious.

If religious be told to see God's will in the directives of the superior, they will look with a certain relentless human logic for something more of God — of love — in that same superior. Perhaps in the Church generally the importance of authority has too often been stressed, vital though it undeniably is. In the gentle personage of the late Pope John one found a softening of this theme of authority, touching in consequence the heart of a world. Priests in their confessionals and pulpits, teachers in their classrooms, Sisters in their convents, and superiors in their offices will with profit follow his lead of love and compassion.

Love is not sentimentality. God neither created the world nor redeemed it out of sentimentality; Calvary demonstrates love, but not sentimentality. Dr. Eric Fromm, noted psychiatrist, states that "the active character of love can be described by stating that love is primarily giving, not receiving." It should be noted, however, that love is not *only* giving, but also receiving. Dr. Ashley Montague writes that "love is the communication of a feeling toward others that you are profoundly involved in them, that you are deeply interested in their development, in the growth of their capacities to be human beings who can relate themselves so as to confer benefits upon others." In short, love surely involves *attentive concern* for the welfare of another, for the sake of that other. Christ's parables of the good Samaritan and the good shepherd as well as his own loving acceptance of a Mary Magdalen all exemplify love as attentive concern for others. Nor was his attentive concern ever a smothering or possessiveness.

It may be noted in passing, however, that an alleged concern for the welfare of another has too often served as an excuse, an all-sufficient reason, for varieties of injustice, of tale-bearing, of correction which crushes and disheartens. Sad travesties of charity have too often been masked under the guise of a deed undertaken for another's welfare. It would not be without profit for religious to study the devious forms in which hostility expresses itself — for it generally takes care first to assume respectable garb before venturing into daylight.



Now in religious communities love must be handed down as the prime heritage and legacy of these religious united under Christ. This attentive concern must be manifested in seriously practical ways, especially in respectful recognition on the part of superiors that each young religious<sup>1</sup> is truly individual before God. If she is to be loved she must first be known, known in her own particularity. She must be listened to. If troubled, she should be gently encouraged — though never pressured — to express the problem. This may consume much time for the superior or advisor, extended through several sessions. But the alternative to this sustained labor of love is the abomination of diagnosis by guess, by opinion, by presumption or prejudice.

This is a failure, a grievous failure, in love. Though accomplished allegedly for the spiritual welfare of the recipient, it more often produces such deep discouragement and disillusionment as to render growth and healthy perseverance very problematical indeed. True, correction is sometimes necessary and has its proper role, used sparingly with respect for the basic adulthood of the recipient. But love is a far greater need, and unless love very obviously forms the clearly perceived backdrop against which admonition is administered, all correction will be largely futile. Such correction will only breed resentment, depression, or more skillful deviousness in the future. But the failure to “profit” from the correction will itself be charged to the recipient’s lack of virtue. And so the self-defeating spiral of lovelessness grows.

Most human beings find their own personality a mystery. Saint Paul himself professed such perplexity (Rom. 7:15), and counselors consume hours of painstaking attention to learn only a few complexities of one human personality. Is it not then cause for wonder if a religious hears herself analyzed and classified when no such attentive, loving concern and inquiry has preceded? Little wonder that the damage from such unsound, unloving judgments can be limitless.

What, moreover, of those instances where a religious presents physical symptoms which somehow elude actual medical diagnosis,

<sup>1</sup> Although these reflections primarily concern young religious, they apply readily to situations pertaining to older, professed religious. Moreover, it would be *extremely naive* to presume that all undue pressures in a religious community emanate from those who govern. Individual subject religious have serious responsibilities toward fellow religious in this matter.

only to encounter the hasty accusation that she herself is deliberately producing the symptoms? No responsible student of human emotions will concede any reliability whatsoever to such haphazard guesswork. If in fact the affliction be psychosomatic in origin — itself a difficult fact to ascertain — then the verdict tempered with love will be that such emotional sources of symptoms must be deep and troublesome indeed. This should lead to true compassion, not accusation, not reckless charges or reprimands.

It is surely regrettable if religious are prodded and stung rather than nourished with the bread of encouragement. Too often, one suspects, reliance is placed on reprimand and affront, whereas the Lord compared himself to the shepherd who leads but does not drive. For who can drive another toward love? And what else is the goal? We need meditation on the ultra-gentle form of re-monstrance used by Christ with Peter (John 21:7).

The person who would love strives, then, to see each individual *as* individual, as different, as unique. Thus love joins hands with respect. Love and respect look upon each religious as a child of God unique in human history, for absolutely no other human has had exactly her history. No other human being ever has been or will again be *she*. She alone was *this* child of these parents, experiencing their love (or lack of it) in her own way, with her own peculiar chemistry, with just precisely her combination of credits and debits before God and man. She is truly unique, a book of which there is only one copy — for better or worse! The person who would lead a religious life of Christ-like love will strive, though it often be difficult, to recognize this uniqueness in all its mystery.

If then each religious is unique, it will be part of a spiritual formation administered with intelligent love to allow much latitude within which each distinct personality can grow toward love in its own distinctive way. For each is different. Human nature does manifest certain profound similarities and common properties wherever found, true, but it is always found in single persons, each unique, each a new soul immortally imaging the Creator. So the common Christian heritage of spirituality will be assimilated by each into a different human mind and soul — permeated by the influences of a personally unique history. Each will be a unique

part of the true Vine, each an historically new member of the Body. For each one, therefore, *spirituality will differ somewhat*.

Each religious will grow uniquely—or grow not at all if ill-fitted into a common mold arbitrarily prescribed by other human beings. In the religious community, love for the individual will dictate a certain psychological liberty of spirit for each, some freedom for individual growth and development. All will not be compelled or insistently urged to seek a fulfillment exactly similar to every other, for such regimentation entails a multitude of exacting norms instead of the great single norm of love for Christ, expressed by facing the realities of my life this one day. Failing this, religious can exert cruel pressures on fellow religious by acutely critical observation of any individuality or deviation from community norms.

Moreover, if the one goal proposed for all is made rigidly wooden it then becomes for *some* a source of enormous interior pressures. Such religious feel exhorted, driven, to strive toward a goal which *for them* is at once very vague but extremely urgent. With personalities peculiarly sensitive and sincere, they strain to live according to a standard which ill befits them—a standard very likely suggesting impossibly unrealistic restraints of human feelings, an endlessly perfect production of work, and “mind over matter” in a manner which would do credit to an angel! The imposition of such a single fixed community image or norm for all, with little or only nominal allowance for individualities, often results interiorly in the tyranny of hopelessly remote ideals. Emotional exhaustion may be the eventual result, in one degree or another of severity.

For those in religious communities whose office involves the spiritual formation and guidance of others, it is surely erroneous to presume that any exhortation of whatever content will automatically “do some good” simply because God and union with him is the underlying purpose of the exhortation. One priest-psychologist warns:

It is possible, too, that spiritual directives, books of customs and rules of spiritual formation in particular institutes, coming down from other cultures and other times, bring out the latent infantilism in youthful subjects in the name of formation in obedience and humility. In these matters, as well as in the



more sensitive area of chastity, it is possible for religious indoctrination to lead to overconformity and an unhealthy suppression of individuality instead of true growth in virtue. Sometimes the ideals of the religious life are presented in such glowing terms that they bear more resemblance to adolescent day-dreams than to a realistic picture of man's endless struggle for perfection.<sup>2</sup>

Obviously each community does have certain common goals and ideals to which members and young candidates as well must devote themselves. Yet these very ideals will be seriously self-defeating if they be rigidly and severely presented so that only a Spartan type of personality can accomplish them in any degree. Such ideals will hardly prove enriching or conducive to love in persons seeking a life with Christ. In fact, a reverse process may be initiated in some whereby bitter interior struggle actually supplants a truly human life with Christ. Such a person unknowingly incorporates into her personal ideals a set of relentlessly "necessary" qualities which actually exceed her capabilities, qualities which she has been told — or thinks she has been told — are absolutely essential for being a "good religious."

These qualities, good in themselves, may be so presented as to exceed the capabilities of most — qualities of long and lasting fervour in prayer, never-failing charity toward all, immunity from temptations against chastity, superior performance daily in all assignments, etc. While these qualities seem faintly innocuous when expressed here in words, they become for this religious tyrannical necessities, necessities upon which — she feels — ultimate fulfillment of her purpose in life depends. This emphasis upon self has been mistakenly conceived as God's will and is sincerely pursued as such. But unfortunately the sincerity of the pursuit will not render the goal any more attainable. One wonders if Peter, John, or Magdalen ever thought of life with Christ in such distorted terms?

This type of spirituality as absorbed by certain personalities who were unknowingly pre-disposed toward unhealthy severity with self, may actually instigate periods of prolonged, severe depression. For as this ego-ideal remains hopelessly "distant" despite all efforts to "close the gap," the person slumps back in frustration

<sup>2</sup> "Emotional Development and Spiritual Growth," by Timothy J. Gannon. *Insight*, Vol. 1, no. 2, Fall, 1962 (3140 Meramec, St. Louis 18, Mo.).

and disgust with self. When the black mood of dismay and self-recrimination finally subsides, the struggle resumes, only to lead once again to interior collapse. The emotional strain is considerable. Nor will mere advice bring relief, for this has become now a deeply rooted way of life. In many instances, it can be alleviated if discovered and highlighted — but the process will be slow indeed. How unfortunate that such a useless burden was ever assumed in the name of Christ. Directors and directresses who were discerning might have prevented it, or diverted the individual charitably back to the lay state. Love is always individualized, and attentive love would usually have discerned the growing distortion.

Before God each is surely an individual. Each must fulfill in love only those personal capabilities given to her by God. Perhaps she will not teach so popularly, pray so fervently, sing so lyrically, laugh so brightly, converse so fluently, obey so enthusiastically, study so effectively, work so efficiently, or charm so many as some fellow religious does. For each is individual. Each is different; what a dreary world and what a dull community if all were the same! Thus the love of God focuses somewhat differently on each. The teaching of spirituality whereby each individual finds and loves God in return must respect that individuality if it is to enkindle rather than overwhelm and submerge the soul.

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# *Love, Exigence, and Redemption*

ROBERT GUELLUY

God manifests many contrasts; he is at once inaccessible and present. "What nations have gods as near to them as our God is to us?" Thus does Scripture express this truth. God is redoubtable as well as good, exigent as well as forgiving. He punishes even as he pardons. If God exhibits these contrasts, it is because he is Love.

Nothing is so exacting and yet so reassuring as being loved; it is frightening as well as comforting. It is a reality of far reaching consequences. God inflicts punishment that it may serve mercy; he requires justice because he is too good to act otherwise. How can God be good to the extent that he is just? In our usual attitudes we are somewhat good and somewhat just. However, it is quite difficult, when one is just a little good, to be at all just. Yet our God is the God of justice to such a point that he is the God of mercy.

An example will illustrate the point. Suppose someone has squandered a large sum put at his disposal. Now he is bankrupt, and bankrupt through his own fault; he has lost everything, and in a shameful way. One can be quite good and say to him: "We will speak no more of it; it is forgotten; you owe me nothing. We'll go on just as before." Such a reaction is assuredly a sign of great generosity.

But there is an entirely different way to manifest a much more profound goodness. His creditor can say: "The sum that you owe me you must repay to the last cent. Here are more funds. I am going to make you a new loan as proof of my renewed confidence in you. Regardless of the way you have forfeited respect, here are new possibilities. But you will be bankrupt still and you will live as your poverty demands — frugally. You will know austerity, and dollar for dollar you will gain back what you have squandered. You are evidently incapable of doing so; being today what you were yesterday, you will be subject to the same temptations; you will run the risk of losing this sum as you

did the previous one. Since I cannot really count on you to carry out this program alone, here's what's going to happen: I will live with you in your condition as a man who has failed. Forgetting my own status, I will adopt yours. I will be with you in hardship, share your difficult lot; I will give you the necessary courage and you can lean on me. By yourself you cannot redeem the past, but together we will retrieve the losses. I will be with you all the time, not just beside you, but with you in a real union, to help you, to sustain you, to remake your life."

This is somewhat the story of redemption — the merciful God acting justly. It is the good God requiring satisfaction. It is God loving us too much not to be demanding. All true affection is demanding. When one expects much, one exacts much. Generally speaking, grandparents spoil children. They are too old, they are no longer able to cope with children, so they take the easiest way out. After a child has vacationed with his grandparents, his parents often sigh: "Now we must reeducate him since he has been allowed to do as he pleases." Parents, because they love better, require more.

God loves us too much not to be exacting. He will not leave us as we are; he will not abandon us to ourselves. God would draw us to himself through the mystery of redemption, through the suffering of Christ and through our own suffering. God's very goodness necessitates his demands; his mercy reaches even to justice.

All of God's punishments revealed in the Old Testament are destined to bring back to him a guilty people. They are not chastisements inflicted out of vengeance, but rather an expression of love and affection pushed to untold lengths. Scripture calls it "the jealousy of the Most High." God clings tenaciously to his people; he wants their love enough to demand it imperiously, so much so that he will not spare punishment for infidelity. It is obvious that if God chastizes his people, it is because he loves. Were he not so loving, were his heart not so enamored of men, he would abandon them; he would let them go their own way.

Once again we must place ourselves in the presence of this God who expects much from us, who looks on us with claims. We may be resigned to our faults, to our lack of holiness, but



God is not; he is not ready for compromise. Perhaps we think it too late to be converted, but this is not his opinion. He loves us too much to indulge in a similar thinking.

Today, in response to his call of exacting mercy, let us dislodge ourselves from all the places of refuge in which we have sought to hide from ourselves. Let us force down the barriers of pretense and lay bare our false excuses. Let us face things as they really are in order to hear his call in all truth.

God has sent us the Lord Jesus that he might share our lot, walk on our earth, know the same failure, experience — but without sin — the sorrow and shame of our sins. In the garden of Olives, Christ experienced to the full the degradation and disgust of sin. Although innocent, he tasted the bitterness and discouragement of the faults of his race, the disgrace of his own people. He passed through all in order to heal all, that in no circumstances need we ever be alone. Thus in every situation can he speak to us of the Father's demands, having himself borne their terrifying weight.

Christ, having known a life of failure, is able to be with us on our journey, in our trials and troubles. The greatest of all suffering is to see sin abound while one is straining to do good. Christ knew this pain: the greater his efforts to change the hearts of his people, the more did they harden their hearts. He was a stumbling block and a cause of scandal. Thwarted in his purposes, defeated in his existence, he hung on the cross, deserted except for his mother, Saint John, and a few faithful friends. He had disappointed even souls of good will who for a time had believed him to be the Messiah. Thinking they had been deceived, they turned aside.

God-with-us, sinless but sin-laden, knows how failure can darken our lives, knows the sting of physical and moral suffering. In nothing have we been left alone. See his sharing our burden as an exigency of love, the expression of mercy pushed to infinity!

In reality, the world in which we live is a vast way of the cross. The evolution of humanity bears this mark of Christ on Calvary. All our lives are replicas of the life of the Son of God and, being lived in union with him, they are changed. What before was loss, what was once a cause of sadness and a source of dis-

couragement, becomes a treasure, a means of union with God, an opportunity to become one with Christ.

We are made to live together, to live "with." For this reason God has come down among us. He has undergone trial and suffering that he might draw near us, that he might be one of us. In order to come so close he must indeed be very different from us, for we are not capable of drawing this close to others. We find it quite difficult to put ourselves in another's place. When we do try to give way to another, it is often in a spirit of condescension, sprinkled with remarks hinting at our virtue or our superiority. How inclined we are to look down from a pedestal of self-righteousness, from a self-erected throne of virtue! God acts completely otherwise; instead of gazing down upon us from above, he "emptied himself," carried our shame, bore our burdens.

Let us acknowledge our need of redemption. We must not view the cross from outside, as it were, seeing it as a sacrifice accomplished for others only. *We* are the fruits of the cross. To speak in the language of the early Fathers, we are the offshoots, the branches brought to life on this tree of the cross. We must admit that we are redeemed, that the crucifix is not superfluous for us. We need to cease playing the "just" man, the man of upright conscience, recognizing beyond our genuine good will innumerable faults. We must admit that the worm is in the fruit, the tare in the wheat, vices in our virtues. Our efforts to succeed do not spring solely from the love of God; in our attempts to be virtuous there is much disordered self-love. We must acknowledge that imperfection permeates our actions, that pride infects our being. It is necessary to face this fundamental corruption which is in us.

We hold everything from the crucifix. We may not repudiate it, reject it as useless, refer it only to others. Let us rejoice in having a Redeemer! At Christmas time we read in the Breviary this thought of Saint Leo the Great: "Day of joy is this day of Nativity! Day of joy for the down-hearted, for all the wayward, for all people who lack hope; day of joy for all sinners; day of joy in which is celebrated the coming of the Savior!" For those who are without fault, without sin, December 25 will be just like the day before, obviously, since Christmas is a feast cele-

brating the coming of the Savior and they have no need to be saved. We want to know the joy of Christmas and the glory of Easter, the happiness of being redeemed. The crucifix is for us; we need to know how exceedingly great is the divine affection. If our Lord has chosen the way of the cross and the death of Calvary, it was certainly not out of necessity; he could have redeemed at less cost; such extravagance was not necessary.

What a strange thing that God, instead of simply doing away with suffering (which we would surely have preferred), judged it better to keep it. He could have suppressed our trials, but he chose to bear them. Therefore, we can be at peace in looking upon the crucifix; because Christ has done this, we can be sure of his love. Because the Father has willed to sacrifice his only begotten Son for us, our hearts can rejoice. It is true that Christ died for me; therefore, I can die without fear. It is my strength and my security to know that the Father can see no man die without remembering his Son dying on the cross. Would you have him blot out this memory and do away with this emotion? Death will always be a reminder of the upheaval of Calvary. This is my assurance, poor sinner that I am, before the God of holiness.

Thus has God preferred to live with me, to share my sorrow, to know suffering and death. He has allowed suffering to abound in him; he has willed to undergo untold agony; he has chosen to die without anesthesia on the gibbet of shame. This is not reasonable, it is foolhardy; it is not the wisdom of men, but the foolishness of God. It is what Saint Paul calls "the folly of the cross." Before this folly of God addressed to us, before Jesus of Nazareth, Son of Mary and eternal Son of the thrice-holy God, before this astonishingly excessive love, there can be only one response. "You should not have done that; you have gone too far; you exaggerate. But since you refused to listen to reason, since you are intransigent in your way of loving me, there is only one thing to do and that is to be with you in all things. And if you saw fit to walk thus for me, you will not walk alone; I will follow." This is the prayer of Charles de Foucauld, who chose abjection and humiliation in order to be with Jesus.

We are all alike, ardently longing for humility—it is so beautiful, such a great virtue!—but we do not want humiliation.

This shows, of course, how unauthentic is our humility. We cringe before humiliation while being enamored of humility. Recall the degrees of humility about which Saint Benedict and others have spoken: a preference for humiliation, for the condition of Jesus, prompted not by an unhealthy love of mortification and suffering (that would not be a sign of sanctity) but by a taste for being with God, by a need to be with him, by a desire to be together.

Meditation on the God who is merciful love, whose affection engaged him in the mystery of redemption, should inevitably lead us to these thoughts. While thinking of this salvation, we are in the act of being saved; while dwelling on God's affection, we are in the process of being loved. We must meditate on this divine mercy moved to redeem as something concerning us here and now, as something of immediate moment, as a *present* reality.

"Today, if you should hear his voice, harden not your hearts." Today; do not wait until tomorrow! "Today, if you should hear his voice"; you are hearing it now. The light comes simply in thinking no longer of self, but of God. In that same flash, you will see yourself as you are. The God of faith will stand revealed, the God of holiness and of mercy who appeals to us to live united with him. And you will understand better that your religious vocation is not just a call heard and answered ten, twenty, thirty years ago, but a permanent reality; the call is ever present, as new today as on the day of your profession. Its efficacy endures; it is a vocation to live together by faith in his love, to live with him. With the certitude of faith, you know who he is and that he deserves to be followed. Today, after years of religious life, after many falls, many deficiencies, many sins, your vocation should take on a new color. All these falls tell you something; all these sins express to you the divine invitation — the call of God. They are invitations to love better. We must do our best to see who we are and how we are loved gratuitously. We must understand better that God is love.

What should I fear and why should I be afraid, since I am so loved? It is terrible to be loved to such a point; one may not trifle with this love! God would not be so terrible if he did not love so much. Such extremes are overwhelming. I can no longer remain indifferent and inert; I am forced to probe this mystery,



at once so staggering and so comforting. In doing so I find a new peace and a new liberty. I am more free, now that I have understood that my vocation in the Church of God is to be the poor sinner whose return makes all keep holiday.

My vocation is to manifest the God of mercy; this will be the essence of heaven. When we meet there, we shall say: "What? You? Here? And I too!" And we will radiate the divine compassion in making visible what God is capable of, God who is to this point pardoning benevolence.

Saint Therese of the Child Jesus knew this revolutionary liberty. Fifteen days before her death, having impatiently refused a kindness and spoken curtly to the infirmarian, she recovered herself and said, "I sincerely beg your pardon. I have acted all too impetuously." Then she added, "How glad I am to experience my frailty, to be still so weak and to have to receive all." This is astonishing. We would have said, "Heavens, to be at the end of life and still acting like that!"

Our meditation on the mystery of the redemption ought to put us in the way of interior freedom. No longer will we turn in upon our faults, idling time like puppies chasing their tails. Leave all that aside in the joy of being loved for nothing. Our past sins, in the very measure in which we acknowledge them, become for us a source of new joy. Everything changes color because God is with us. What was once a cause of distress is now a cause of rejoicing, what before brought on depression now evokes encouragement; manifestations of weakness become the support of a new strength. This is the mystery of redemption, the divine alchemy transforming all.

Satan's own weapons are turned against him; sin is vanquished even in its consequences. Suffering and death become instruments of life, agents of holiness, means to sanctification. Our sins boomerang against the adversary of life. The saints in heaven would not be the saints they are had they not behind them their faults. All of them, great sinners and small, have known how to use this reversal, and this constitutes their sanctity. Saint Augustine would not be Saint Augustine had he not been the converted sinner. So must our sins become a means of loving better, our

slavery be put at the service of a new liberty, our distress a seed of fresh delight.

We must welcome this truth and be happy not only in spite of our sins but because we are sinners, because we stand before God empty-handed, awaiting all from him. Instead of the miserable pleasure of proprietorship which costs us so dearly, let us reach out to the happiness which nothing can dull, which knows no turmoil, whose riches is God himself. This treasure suffers neither corruption nor destruction. Happy the day on which we realize our condition as redeemed!

Let us ask the joy of the pardoned sinner, that our sins may be the point of departure for a new expansion of soul. For this there is needed a great purity of intention, a great stripping. We are asked to seek God because he is infinitely worthy, to seek him for his own sake, without turning in on self, on what wounds us, on our own or others' faults, except in thanksgiving.

This is the magnanimous conversion to which we are called. It is to think of nothing except joy. The Church dares to sing "Happy fault!" and so must we glory in a happy fault today, confessing it tomorrow, glad to give our Lord this tribute of homage with head held high. Instead of saying "Misery of miseries!" we must chant "Glory be to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit!" And we are called to this joy, not only now and again, but permanently. This is fantastic!

We have only one reproach to make to God: "This is too beautiful to be true!" Our God is too wonderful, and this is what disconcerts us who are so tiny. *Dare to believe boldly, in trials, in failure, in all life's ruthlessness; continue to believe ardently.* It is not a dream. Were we to grasp this truth, we would perceive a new dimension not only in heaven, but here and now. And after next week we would say, in looking at one another, "My, it is amazing how you have changed...."

# *Constitutions, a Source of Spiritual Vitality*

WILLIAM F. HOGAN, C.S.C.

It is rather regrettable that religious do not always have a deep appreciation of the place of their Constitutions in their lives. For many the Constitutions are simply a book of do's and don'ts, a collection of basic laws concerned with the internal government of a community and the conduct of the members. They are this, but indeed they are much more; for they constitute a powerful source of vital spirituality for the religious and in doing so they serve as a guarantee of the common life of the community.

The Popes of this century have on many occasions urged religious to remain close to their founders in spirit, not in the sense of excluding any changes in the accidentals of the religious institute or in the apostolate as conceived by the founder in his time, but in the sense of venerating him with true filial devotion, of incorporating into their own lives the founder's ideals and goals, and of seeking perfection in the observance of the Constitutions handed down from his time. Every vocation to religious life is particularized; God calls the soul to perfection in a definite religious community, and the religious will achieve sanctity only in living the life of that community. The source of this life ultimately is the founder and his legacy of the Constitutions of the community, formulated with the help of the special lights given him by God in his capacity of founder. It is of utmost importance, then, that religious drink deeply of the spirit of their founder, especially as it is found in their Constitutions. For this reason Holy Mother Church has always insisted on preserving the basic spirit of the original Constitutions of a religious congregation or order, permitting changes only after the vote of the general chapter and then never allowing any changes which would deviate from the basic principles and ideals of the religious founder, for it is upon them that she has placed her stamp of approval.

In every religious community there is to be a common spirituality possessed by all the members. This spirituality is not divorced from the spirituality of the Church, for all religious are

primarily Christians; but there is a special emphasis on some devotions or virtues which were stressed by the founder. This element is of great significance, for it is one of the reasons which justifies the existence of a multiplicity of religious congregations dedicated to doing the same basic apostolic works; by means of it the religious bear witness in this world to various facets of God's perfection. In her universal laws governing religious, Holy Mother Church gives an indication of the need for preserving the spiritual atmosphere proper to a congregation when she requires that ordinarily there will be but one ordinary confessor in a religious house of women (Canon 520, #1). Commentators tell us that the purpose of this regulation is to guarantee uniformity of spiritual direction, and we might add, direction in conformity with the spirit of the Constitutions, which necessitates knowledge of the community by the ordinary confessor.

This spirituality common to all the members of the community does not imply identical external practices, but rather a stress on seeking the same special virtues or combination of virtues proper to the congregation as envisioned by its lawgiver and necessary for the fulfillment of the vocation to that community. This common spiritual emphasis forms an integral part of the common life of a community and contributes to its vitality. By the common life we mean the visible sharing by the community in the life of love common to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit; this is possible only where the same spirit reigns among the members — and this spirit is fostered through seeking common spiritual goals. A careful study of the Constitutions of a community will reveal even to an outsider the spirit proper to that group. It may not be stated at the beginning of the book, but it will be evidenced through the importance given certain virtues, practices, and feasts and even in the order in which various points are taken up. The religious themselves must be made cognizant of the spiritual content of the Constitutions, for unfortunately many are not aware of the treasures contained therein, and often fail to fully live out the religious life to which they are particularly called.

A deficiency in grasping the full value of the Constitutions as a spiritual guide can entail serious spiritual consequences for a religious. One of the most serious of these is eclecticism in



spiritual matters. Often religious pick up devotions inconsistent with their vocation, or engage themselves in reading spiritual books which are in fact foreign to the spirit and life of their community; in doing so they unknowingly prevent themselves from making the spiritual progress that should be theirs in their particular community. Harmony in spiritual ideals will be lacking among the members and the common life has lost a valuable source of vitality. But when a thorough realization of the spirit of the founder as expressed in the Constitutions guides the religious in the practice of private devotions and the choice and application of beneficial spiritual reading, the members of the community will progress together more rapidly and surely in the vocation that is theirs. We must never forget that all spiritual doctrine, whether from the spiritual classics or from some recent work, must be applied in our lives in accordance with the special spirit of the congregation or it is relatively meaningless.

It would be well for religious superiors and spiritual directors to urge the religious under their care to read their Constitutions often and use them for food in meditation, following the example of the Church in her legislation that at least once a year the Constitutions be read in public (Canon 509, #2,1). Religious must ever bear in mind that in expressing the obligation of seeking perfection, the Code of Canon Law tells us that in addition to observing the vows faithfully and integrally, religious are to order their lives in accordance with the rules and Constitutions of their own institute and *thus* strive for the perfection of their state (Canon 593). It is clear from this wording that the Constitutions play an important role in the attainment of sanctity; thus much encouragement should be given to religious to absorb their spirit prayerfully and not to use them only rarely to check some point of government or obligation in a legalistic way. Their bindings should be well worn from frequent use; the life of the community will flourish proportionately.

The Constitutions are the safeguard of the common life of a religious community, for they oblige both subjects and superiors, being the ultimate binding power or authority of the institute once they have been ecclesiastically approved. They assure unity of spirit and observance within the whole religious community, sub-

stantially maintaining the ideas and ideals of the divinely inspired religious founder. They guard against any excessive individualism, into which it is so easy for a religious to fall, requiring him to observe the same discipline as his fellow religious and thus forestalling abuses and discord. They promote charity and foster peace and harmony by laying the same basic obligations upon all.

The Constitutions repeat, specify, and elaborate on the laws of the universal code touching the common life. Actually the Code of Canon Law does little more than indicate the necessity of the observance of the common life in religious institutes; it is in their own particular legislation that religious communities find the means and ways in which they are to live the common life and obtain the manifold graces that it yields. Most Constitutions clearly delineate such matters as regular discipline, the order of the day, food, clothing, furniture, religious exercises, etc.; these are all external matters which serve to promote the living of a deep, interior, common life of love, the special sharing of Trinitarian love which should be the portion of religious. While these items are not to be confused with the common life, as unfortunately all too often happens, they are intimately connected with it. Fidelity towards them will assure greater fidelity to the common life itself.

The Code of Canon Law permits superiors to dispense professors and students from certain common observances imposed by the Constitutions "as often as they judge such dispensation to be for the success of their studies" (Canon 589, #2); no other cases are envisioned by the universal law of the Church. The Constitutions of more recently founded congregations, and some of the revised editions of older groups, allow the superior to dispense from disciplinary laws which are proper to the community, but not those which come from the general laws governing religious in the Church. Superiors should not use this power too freely; they must always ascertain whether there is a just and adequate reason before they exempt their subjects from obligations, and subjects should not look for exceptions without serious reasons. The Constitutions are designed to preserve the life of the institute; too many exceptions can occasion much harm. This is not to say, however, that no exceptions must ever be made; a superior who would never allow a just cause to move him to

grant a dispensation from a disciplinary norm would confuse the material value of observing the Constitutions as such with the life they seek to promote. The same is true of a subject who would never consider asking for a dispensation. Laws are never an end in themselves, for they are designed to promote the common good of a society; religious Constitutions are no exception.

The spirit of the founder as manifested in the Constitutions should always be the guiding norm in applying and living out the Constitutions; a legalistic mentality which would go just so far as the letter of the law requires is disastrous. The individual subject who would take a narrow view of them will deprive his soul of the valuable spiritual fruit which they offer; the religious house which will have a minimal appreciation of them will not develop the Trinitarian life of love which is the soul of the common life. A merely external observance of the Constitutions should not be the aim of religious, but a generous interior love and esteem for them. This can come about only by a careful study and spiritual use of them, not simply in the period of formation but all through one's religious life, both in private and in common.

May all religious heed the words of Pope Pius XI:

In the first place, we exhort all religious to take pattern after their Father Founder and Lawgiver if they would become sure and abundant sharers in the graces which are bound up with their vocation. For what else did these most illustrious men do than obey divine inspiration when they founded their Institute? Therefore, every Founder wishes that something distinctively characterize his Institute and assuredly those among his followers in whom this character is found are not wandering from the primitive foundation. Hence, let Religious, like the best of sons, take every care to safeguard the honor of their Father Lawgiver by observing his precepts and counsels and by absorbing his spirit; nor will they go astray as long as they walk in the footsteps of their Founder. "And their children for their sakes remain forever" (Eccli. 44:13). May they obey with such humility the laws of their Institute and maintain so well the manner of life observed from the beginning that daily they may be more worthy of the religious state (*Acta Apostolicae Sedis*. Vol. XVI, p. 135).

Indeed a love for and frequent use of the Constitutions is a source of spiritual vitality!

# *The Gordian Knot of Suffering*

SISTER MARY XAVIER, O.S.U.

Suffering in its many phases has presented the "Gordian knot" to all who have tried to unravel its mystery. Although there is hardly a philosophical system that has not confronted the problem of evil, none of them has produced a solution to this enigmatic problem. Seeing no pattern of preference or exemption from suffering, philosophers find no rule to ascertain who shall suffer. They note that the good and the bad suffer; the rich and the poor suffer; the young and the old suffer. Baffled in their attempts to undo the tangle of the mystery of suffering, philosophical schools have attempted to cut the "difficult knot" by various means of rationalizing.

Tremendously concerned with the problem of suffering, the Chinese philosophers present plausible theories on the evil of suffering. Confucius, one of the most influential men that ever lived, believed that all forms of activity that result in unhappiness are the result of not aligning oneself with the Will of Heaven. Lao Tzu's guiding principle, which helped cultivate the forbearance and resilience of the Chinese in adversity, was "doing everything by doing nothing." Greek philosophers, too, tried to meet the problem of suffering. For Epicurus, absence of sorrow is attained by independence of soul. The wise man, he maintained, can endure the smart of suffering either by remembering some past pleasure or by living in anticipation of future happiness. Epicurus in his illness remembered his friends. To disregard pain was the Cynic motif; to show apathy toward trouble was the Neo-Platonist plan. The Stoic ideal was an attempt to ignore the vicissitudes of life, and Stoic virtue consisted in a disposition through which man acquiesces to all the events of life as to his true good.

Never pretending that he had unravelled the problem of suffering, Saint Thomas, following Aristotle, recognized evil as the privation of good, and this deprivation causes a disorder. Many modern philosophers have a pessimistic view of evil. The atheistic



view may recommend suicide or euthanasia as an antidote for the misery of suffering. Identifying evil with the past and good with the future, Marxist evolutionism attributes misery to old regimes and promises Utopia with Communism. Actually, the knotty problem of suffering cannot be solved by philosophical systems or pure reasoning.

Speculating on the difficulty of suffering from a theological viewpoint, the writer of the Book of Wisdom considered suffering on earth to be disciplinary, a testing fire to ascertain a man's worth. "As gold in the furnace he has proved them" (Wisdom 3:6). For the Psalmist, as for many of us, the stumbling block to the understanding of suffering is the success of the wicked and the adversity of the good. "But as for me, my feet had almost stumbled, my steps had well nigh slipped. For I was envious of the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked" (Ps. 72:2-3). The Book of Job narrates a searching analysis of God's ways with man. Stricken with evils of all kinds, Job is urged by his wife and his friends to confess his guilt, which they thought was the cause of God's punishment. Knowing his innocence, Job refuses to do so. "Then his wife said to him, 'Do you still hold fast your integrity? Curse God, and die.' But he said to her, 'You speak as one of the foolish women would speak. Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?'" (Job 2:9-10). Attempting to untie the "Gordian knot" of suffering, Job wrestles verbally with God to find the solution to the universal misery of man. Could it have been Job's fidelity to God — "Though he kill me, I will yet trust in him" (Job 13:15) — which caused God to answer this bold inquirer? In a whirlwind God, majestically yet condescendingly, replies to Job, alerting him to his finiteness and limitations. "Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell me, if you have understanding" (Job 38:4). Then God proceeds to question Job, asking him if he knows the mysteries in the heavens, in nature, and in animals. God ironically invites Job to rule the world. Realizing at last that no man can understand all the ways of God, Job cries to him, "Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know" (Job 42:3).

Does it not seem paradoxically strange that in a world so filled with mystery and wonder, finite man questions the infinite Creator?

Rarely does the abundance of goodness mystify man; it is only evil that puzzles him. Job did better than most of us, for he noted both ends of the pole of human happenings and vindicated God's ways with man when he reasoned with his wife and his friends: "The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord" (Job 1:21). And, "Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?" (Job 2:10).

The problem of evil is a mystery which God alone can explain; it remains utterly insoluble apart from the concept of the Fall and the Redemption. And even with this knowledge there still remains a vast gulf between our limited intellectual insight and our emotional reaction to it when we are personally confronted with the problem of evil. For the mystery of evil is not a mystery in the sense that the Trinity and the Incarnation are mysteries; suffering constitutes for us not only a mystery but a problem. Yet God in his mercy sent us someone who, while he did not tell us the *why* of suffering, yet did show us *how* to suffer.

As all creation is a manifestation of God's perfections, so he willed that his incarnate Son should be an exemplification of how he wants man to live. Neither baffled nor dismayed by the problem of suffering, the incarnate God, our Lord Jesus Christ, showed us the way. God's ways for living, in all its aspects, are discovered in the humanity of Jesus. It was of him that his Father said, "This is my beloved Son; hear him" (Mark 9:6). And what does he say? "Learn from me . . . and you will find rest for your souls" (Matt. 11:29).

To learn from him is to adopt his philosophy of life. Jesus not only taught his philosophy of life; he lived it. Espousing the lot of fallen man, he willed to share in everything that befell him, except sin. He did not play the part of man; he was found in everything like man: "A body thou hast fitted to me" (Heb. 10:5). In his teaching and by his example he has plotted the course that the Christian must follow if he is to attain happiness for himself. Leading the way, he invites us to follow him in words which trace the program of Christianity: "If anyone wishes to come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me" (Matt. 16:24).

As we noted, Jesus in his personality showed us how to suffer, yet he never disclosed the why of suffering. That it is not always

a punishment for evil, as many think, is shown in the incident of the man born blind. " 'Rabbi, who has sinned, this man or his parents, that he should be born blind?' Jesus answered, 'Neither has this man sinned, nor his parents, but the works of God were to be made manifest in him' " (John 9:2-3). That suffering is sometimes a punishment for sin may be gathered from Jesus' words after the healing of the paralytic at the pool of Bethesda: " 'Behold, thou art cured. Sin no more, lest something worse befall thee' " (John 5:14). That suffering in union with Jesus can help to acquire a good place in his kingdom is suggested by the words that Jesus spoke to the mother of the sons of Zebedee when she begged a high place for her sons in his kingdom. Jesus answered her: " 'You do not know what you are asking for. Can you drink of the cup of which I am about to drink?' They said to him, 'We can' " (Matt. 20:22). Showing that suffering is somehow necessary for glory, Jesus said to his disciples on their way to Emmaus: "Did not the Christ have to suffer these things before entering into his glory?" (Luke 24:26). That suffering is sometimes a purgation is intimated by these words of our Lord: "Every branch that bears fruit he will cleanse, that it may bear more fruit" (John 15:2). The purging effects of suffering in any of its thousands of forms, if sustained with grace and charity, can purify the soul in various ways. It can annihilate our pride, the great obstacle to union with God; it can strike at our self-love and self-assertion; it can offer reparation for our sins.

Throughout the New Testament, note that our Lord seized every opportunity to present his teaching: "If anyone wishes to come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For he who would save his life will lose it; but he who loses his life for my sake will find it. For what does it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and suffer the loss of his soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? For the Son of Man is to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will render to everyone according to his conduct" (Matt. 16:24-27). In these words Jesus gave the motive which leads us to carry the cross—that to do so is to follow him, is to find union with him in heaven.

Suffering in itself is negative; it is man's answer to suffering that makes all the difference. For the godless, as we have seen,

suffering is an evil to ignore, or an evil to endure, or an evil which leads to despair. Suffering can have no meaning unless viewed from the perspective of eternity. Christians, since our Lord died on the cross, have come to identify suffering in all its forms with the cross; Christians call all their trials a cross. But suffering is not the cross, nor does it lead to the cross, nor can it make reparation for sin, until the Christian, in the spirit of Christ and in union with him, accepts misfortunes and ills with love and conformity to the will of God. Only then can his suffering have spiritual value; only then can he call his suffering a cross.

Looking to the hill of Calvary, the Christian sees there three classic examples of sufferers together with their reaction to it. The man in the middle—Christ, the sinless—offers his agony with love as a victim for the sins of the world; his counterpart are those of his followers, the saints, who offer their sufferings with love in imitation of him and in union with him for the sins of others. The thief on the right represents those sufferers who accept suffering as a just punishment for their sins and beg for forgiveness and a place in his kingdom. The thief on the left portrays those who rebel and despair in their sufferings. They render suffering sterile. It is the intention with which each endures the cross that makes all the difference. Since we pay such a great price for it, what can be more tragic than suffering which is wasted? Suffering without Christ is a loss.

Even though one accepts it, suffering is painful. Suffering in its diverse forms implies something that hurts mentally or physically. How could it otherwise be called suffering? Our exemplar in suffering, Jesus, did not become man in an unimpaired humanity; the Incarnation gave him the capacity to suffer just as we do. The early Christians, together with all modern theologians, identify Jesus with the "suffering servant" spoken of by Isaiah. Look at how humbly he embraces poverty and labor. All of his life the foreboding thoughts of his passion filled him with apprehension. Viewing his passion as a task of the Son of Man, he said: "I lay down my life for my sheep" (John 10:16). According to Saint Thomas, his passion and crucifixion were the *raison d'être* of the incarnation. Although he went to meet his persecutors, yet in



fear he sweat blood on the eve of his passion and cried: "My soul is sad, even unto death. . . . Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass away from me; yet not as I will, but as thou wilt" (Matt. 26:38,39). In imitation of Christ and in union with him, we can accept adversity with love.

No one is exempt from suffering. There is no condition in life, no state in life that can make one immune to suffering. God even willed that his Son should be the suffering Messiah, and Jesus, accepting the will of his Father, became "obedient to death, even to death on a cross" (Phil. 2:8). To his closest friends, his mother, his apostles, his saints, he allotted a large portion of suffering.

Even with all these considerations on the wonderful effects of suffering well, masters of the spiritual life do not counsel that we ask for suffering, but rather that we yield ourselves to God's providence, that he may do with us as he wills. Suffering in itself is an evil and is never to be sought for its own sake; it gains all its meaning from the intention with which we accept it. While the saints advocate self-imposed mortification, yet they concede that the best form of mortification is to accept with our will, in spite of our aversion, all that God sends or allows — suffering or joy. Holy abandonment is the highest form of love.

The *sine qua non*, then, while in the state of suffering, the condition that gives it spiritual value, is the love of God's will with which misfortune is sustained. "Love is the fulfillment of the Law" (Romans 13:10). The supernatural value of anything, including suffering, depends on charity. "If I deliver my body to be burned, yet do not have charity, it profits me nothing" (I Cor. 13:3).

The most penetrating minds in all ages have tried by various and ingenious expedients to "shake off the coil" of human suffering. Just as the Gordian knot could not be loosened, so the mystery of suffering will never be completely unravelled in time. Our Lord could have undone the knotty mystery of suffering for us, but he did not do so; instead he cut it, not by explaining it but by living the life of suffering. He invites us to follow his example. "If anyone wishes to come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me" (Matt. 16:24).

## THE TEST

With serious intent He created  
man to His image; to make test of this  
body He claimed of Mary.

*Let there be man is one thing—but  
let there be this, My hangman? Yes,  
no turning aside of nails. I  
appoint you to My flesh.*

*The hard fast rule, cried nails in Him, is love.  
Climb me, taste me, cried the tree.  
I am heavy, crown to limb  
with harvest Him.*

DANIEL BERRIGAN

## Book Reviews

TRUE DEVOTION TO OUR LADY.  
By Hilda Graef. Hawthorn Books,  
New York, 1963. Pp. 108. Cloth,  
\$3.50. (*Twentieth Century Encyclopedia of Catholicism, Volume 45.*)  
Hilda Graef here attempts to survey  
Marian devotion from Scripture  
through recent thought. The rapid  
exposition of a Marian cult char-  
acterized by emphasis on legend  
and vision forces the reader to agree  
that "Mariology and Marian piety  
are among the main obstacles to  
the reunion of Christendom" (104).  
Miss Graef quotes Hans Küng,  
whose words could serve as criticism  
of her own presentation: "Do we  
not here again need the undimin-  
ished Gospel?" (105). Miss Graef's  
weakest chapter is "Mary in the  
Scriptures," where she fails to show

the fuller understanding of Mary  
in Scripture emerging through the  
work of current scholars. We do  
not find here any statement com-  
parable to Max Thurian's: "Mary,  
on the occasion of the Incarnation,  
thus gathers up in herself the whole  
people of Israel in their expectation  
and symbolizes in herself the whole  
mystery of the Church in its ful-  
filment." These words of the Pro-  
testant thinker occur in his *Mary,  
Mother of all Christians*—a book  
which belies Miss Graef's pessimis-  
tic evaluation of the Protestant  
(and indeed Thurian's own) under-  
standing of Mary.

Miss Graef is not theologizing,  
but the history she presents is in-  
carnate theology and could have  
been given direction by a more

"whole" view—a consciousness of Mary's relation to the Church as it is founded in Scripture and the Fathers, and as it revivifies contemporary thought.

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*THE CROWN OF LIFE: A STUDY IN PERSEVERANCE.* By C. J. McElligott, C.Ss.R. B. Herder Book Company, St. Louis, 1963. Pp. xi, 268. Cloth, \$4.50.

This volume is a thorough study of the many facets of the virtue of perseverance. It deals with the nature and necessity of the virtue, as well as with the application of its power for holiness, in all states of life. Father McElligott is not concerned with final perseverance alone. He discusses perseverance in grace, in duty, in vocation as well. Searching into sources from which to draw material, he found that this virtue "has not lacked exhortation, but it has lacked explanation" (p. viii). For this reason he adopted a practical rather than a speculative treatment of his subject.

The book is structured in four sections. Beginning with Saint Thomas in the "Scholastic Approach," the virtue and gift of fortitude are discussed, along with the allied virtues of magnanimity, patience, constancy, and self-confidence under God, with emphasis on the courage required in sustaining "the good fight." In Part II, the "Sacramental Approach" investigates the seven sacraments as "the principal and most excellent means of grace" (p. 58). Chapter Seven shows the missal as a source-

book of prayers inspiring confidence and courage, and cites beautiful collects drawn from Masses of various feasts throughout the Church year.

In the section entitled "Scriptural Approach," the New Testament is quoted abundantly, the Gospels, Apocalypse, and Epistles being used. Our Lady and Saint Joseph are also included in this section as models of perseverance. A single chapter (21) composes Part IV and is entitled "The Council of Trent." From the canons of the Council are drawn "the true rule of faith and morals concerning the gift of final perseverance" (p. 264).

While the author "hopes that his book will capture and synthesize for all men and women the aspects of perseverance which will help them to live their vocations richly and fully" (jacket), it is doubtful that the volume will appeal to the general reader because of its rather dry style and moralizing tone.

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*101 SAINTS.* By Rev. David Q. Liptak. Bruce Publishing Company, Milwaukee, 1963. Pp. xvii, 170. Cloth, \$2.95.

Lives of the saints are always in demand, as Catholic librarians and booksellers know. The present small volume takes a slightly different slant from most collections of saints' lives. The foreword points this out, explaining that these brief sketches are "a collection of sermonlike essays" whose purpose is "primarily ascetical." Each of these minute biographies appeared originally in

a diocesan weekly newspaper column, and each carries a short moral lesson. These lessons are on the whole simple but well chosen, and directed to the spiritual experience of the modern reader.

The saints themselves are presented in a matter of fact way that is rather attractive. There is no overplay of the miraculous and each saint emerges as a real person (so far as history allows him) whose fundamental claim to sanctity is his wholehearted love and service of God.

Some unknown saints (St. Pambo and St. Homobonus) and some unusual saints (St. Jutta and St. Lazarus) are included among the better known friends of God. One cannot easily assign this book to the attention of any one class of readers. Perhaps it is best to put it on the shelf and let those who seek, find for themselves. Those who like their spiritual reading in capsule form should try it.

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*WE ARE CHRIST'S BODY.* By Pius Parsch. Translated and adapted by Clifford Howell, S.J. Fides Publishers, Notre Dame, Indiana, 1962. Pp. 102. Cloth, \$2.95.

A careful reader of this precious small volume will share Father Howell's delight in having discovered the contents. This is anything but a "literal" translation of the great Pius Parsch's work. But it retains the beautiful simplicity of the original—the deceptive simplicity which masks the profound.

You will find yourself wanting to quote passage after passage. "The truths of our faith are, at one and the same time, like a stream in which a lamb can safely wade and also a mighty river in which an elephant can be out of his depth." The "deep reverence and warm love" the author refers to (p. 36) are present on every page of his own work. The "progression of ideas" in the devotions prominent in our lifetime, preparing for an understanding of Christ as head of the "grace-filled body which is the Church"—all this is an interesting and keen appraisal (p. 17).

The chapter on the "Sacramental Character in Christ's Members" deserves special note. Equally notable and thought provoking are the chapters on "The Living Member" and "The Task of the Members." In fact, the volume is so "packed" that it can last a lifetime.

Sister M. Aloysia, S.S.N.D.  
Mount Mary College  
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## SHORT NOTICES

*SOME PROBLEMS OF CATHOLIC HIGHER EDUCATION.* By Roy J. Defarrari, Ph.D. Daughters of Saint Paul, Boston, 1964. Pp. 282. Cloth/paper, \$3.00/2.00.

Writing for a definite purpose and with deliberate frankness, the author has no qualms about listing those problems which he thinks plague Catholic higher education. In twenty-four chapters these problems are brought up for analysis and discussion. Several chapters are devoted primarily to those institutions staffed and attended by nuns. This



book is directed toward a select audience who are concerned with the direction, development, and quality of Catholic colleges and universities in the United States.

**1964 NATIONAL CATHOLIC ALMANAC.** Edited by Felician A. Foy, O.F.M. Doubleday and Co., Garden City, New York, 1964. Pp. 696. Cloth, \$2.95.

Besides the annual features, this year's treasury contains articles on Pope John XXIII, Pope Paul VI, *Pacem in Terris*, Vatican II, the Lord's Prayer and Bible-reading decision of the Supreme Court, the Catholic Church and birth control, and some of the trends in the civil rights struggle. The price remains one of its most popular features.

**BAREFOOT JOURNEY.** By Sister Felicity, P.C.C. Alba House, Staten Island, New York, 1964. Pp. xi, 169. Cloth, \$3.50.

A light-hearted and fast-moving autobiography of a Poor Clare. Sister Felicity tells us of her wartime years in the W.A.A.F., her conversion to Catholicism, her decision to join a strict religious order. Not all was sweetness, but it has borne fruit in light and joy.

**THE AGE OF ABSOLUTISM.** By Maurice Braure. Hawthorn, New York, 1963. Pp. 138. Cloth, \$3.50.

This slender volume gives a history of the Church in two centuries (1600 to the eve of the French Revolution of 1789) marked by expansion and turmoil. Part I treats of Catholic expansion in a divided Christendom. Part II: the Church, absolute governments and the great

doctrinal disputes in the second half of the seventeenth century (Jansenism, Quietism, Gallicanism, the Protestant challenge). Part III looks at the eighteenth century as "The century of light: The Church and Rationalism."

**A NEW PENTECOST. Vatican II: Session I.** By Vincent A. Yzermans. The Newman Press, Westminster, Maryland, 1963. Pp. xx, 376. Cloth, \$6.50.

Thoughtful reflections by a priest-reporter. The book begins on a personal note, progresses through the daily experiences and reactions of the reporters at the Council, reports soberly and clearly on the work, progress, and difficulties of the First Session, and then gives powerful documentary evidence in statements by the Pope and Council Fathers as well as in several informative interviews. The numerous photos are of good quality. A good introductory work for students of the Council.

**VATICAN II: The Theological Dimension.** Edited by Anthony D. Lee, O.P. The Thomist Press, Washington, D.C., 1963. Pp. xvi, 621. Cloth, \$9.75.

An impressive book in size and content. This volume of essays, done largely by Dominican theologians, brings a Thomistic focus to a number of Council topics. Eight major sections treat of faith and morals, bishop and diocese, laity, states of perfection, sacraments and liturgy, seminaries and studies, missiology, and unity. Since nearly thirty authors are represented, there is some unevenness of style and value. Some theological background is presumed.

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